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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

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March 14, 1997

UM DEPARTMENT TAKES DEVIL OUT OF DETAILS IN PROGRAM PLANNING

MISSOULA —

Got program-planning jitters? Let a department of experts at The University of Montana—Missoula take the devil out of the details.

Conferences and Institutes, located at UM's Center for Continuing Education for the past 21 years, can handle any or all aspects of staging a professional development workshop, conference, institute or seminar on the UM campus, across Montana or around the globe.

"We are process experts," said department Director Gerry Baertsch. "We will lead our clients carefully through the myriad of details that produce the kind of program people remember. No task is too small or too large."

She invites anyone wishing to produce an educational event -- from a one-hour workshop to a multiday conference -- to seek help from her department. Previous clients include UM faculty and departments, other universities foreign and American, government bodies, businesses and professional organizations. Her department is already working on a conference for 2,000 people in the year 2000.

Every program her staff works on has an academic basis, she said, which those seeking the department's services need to provide. As "programming partners" her staff then builds a program on that academic content.

"Real successful" is how Dan Bailey, fire management officer for the Lolo National Forest,

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described the programming partnership between the Forest Service and Conferences and Institutes.

"We'll put together a committee to look at whatever the conference is going to focus on and then go from there."

For Conferences and Institutes, to "go from there" means developing the program, managing all the finances and logistics, handling registration and publicity and conducting an evaluation and wrap-up after the event.

But, if the client prefers, the department will customize its services, taking care of only the area or areas the client needs help with -- registration or budgeting, for example. Baertsch said the department works on a cost-recovery basis, charging for the services requested and time required to administer them.

Professional association meetings is one category in which the department claims strong planning expertise. Others include business, industry and government; humanities and health; international learning; and natural resources. The roughly 40 clients the department has served include Japan's Toyo University, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Plum Creek Timber Co., Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and UM's pharmacy school.

Connie Myers, director of the Carhart center in Huson, said her working relationship with Conferences and Institutes has been "absolutely outstanding.

"They are very customer-service oriented and very easy to communicate with," she said.

Pharmacy Dean Dave Forbes said the health-care conference the department coordinated for him in 1996 "came off without a hitch.

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"I am confident that Conferences and Institutes can handle just about any conference," he said.

To explore programming possibilities with Conferences and Institutes, call Gerry Baertsch at (406) 243-4603.

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